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neck to tail, saying, "You will now give a cow-calf." What remains of the medicine is put into the stall, and the next calf will be a female. A cow that kills her calf in dropping it is given a medicine which will prevent the recurrence of the fatality. Medicine is also given if the milk is not satisfactory in quantity; and by rubbing in a medicine from tail to neck specialists claim to be able to tell whether a calf in the womb is male or female.

A disease which does not yield to treatment is the work either of the spirits or of a sorcerer. Divination is resorted to, and the particular spirit operating having been discovered, the appropriate offerings are made, and the disease will now yield to treatment. If it is due to witchcraft, the chief is informed, and he publicly announces that if the animal is not well by next day, he will have the poison test applied to discover the culprit. This, however, if done at all to-day, is done in secrecy, for the chief who permits the poison cup to be administered is liable to severe penalties. But so universal is the belief in witchcraft that the suppression of the poison cup is adduced as the cause of a great increase in the number of sorcerers, and consequently of the general insecurity.

Cattle are sometimes deliberately poisoned. A man has a case at court, and it goes against him, although he is convinced that he is in the right. He is ordered to pay a cow to his antagonist; which he does, but he first poisons it with a slow-working drug, and the animal will die in a few days. The successful litigant, although he knows perfectly the cause of the death,

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Nothing was left to chance. The spirits having been placated, the natural skill of the hunters must be reinforced by medicines. Indeed it is not improbable that the native would say that the whole of his skill and success is due to medicines and ceremonies. The warrior goes out to battle armed and protected by prayers, drugs, and a good conscience; equally for the hunter good morals, good medicines, are as important as reliable weapons and a steady nerve. *Unkota wa nyanga*, to ensure a good spear-throw, or a straight aim with the ancient rifle which some hunters carried, was rubbed into flesh cuts in the hands; and *kurunga*, to make sure that the animal died quickly and without a long chase, was incised into the arms; but more frequently, and more effectively for this purpose, *kulemba* was attached to the spear. This latter is a deadly poison, happily, perhaps, known only to a very few, for a single scratch is said to be fatal. It is said that the Germans tried unsuccessfully to secure the secret of its manufacture. The poison is attached, in a leaf, to the blade of the spear, and the thrust into the flesh of the animal releases it, so that it enters the blood, and causes a speedy death.

Women must not touch or go near hunting weapons, which are kept in the roof of the house. The spears must not be placed near the fire, lest the game, sniffing in the breeze the smell of smoke, deduce the presence of mankind, and make off. The hunters must eat only freshly cooked food, for cold food destroys, as it does also for chiefs, the virtue of their medicines. Fatal results are sure to follow contact

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223 which the birds settle on the branches and are skilfully caught. The other method is to throw dust in the air, where birds are numerous, just after the young begin to leave the nests. The birds, "thinking it is rain," settle on the ground and are easily caught.

226 *Fishing.*—Fishing remains an important part of the year's work for those living near river or lake. For river fishing, huts are built in the vicinity of the place where the traps are to be set, for the fishers live there as long as the season lasts. Ceremonies similar to those observed before the hunters set out for the bush, must be performed. Sometime in May, when the river is in flood, the chief fisher of the Mbaka dreams of fish, a sign that the time has come to begin the year's work. A great quantity of *sakeada*, fish poison, is prepared, each fisher, and there may be as many as fifty, preparing his own. When all are ready, led by the chief fisher, they go to the water, and trample the poison leaves into the bottom of the river. The poison sickens the fish, which are then easily caught in the traps which are set for them with the mouth opening upstream. As soon as all the traps are set, the men lie down on their backs on the bank, and proceed to invoke the aid of sympathetic magic. They open and close their mouths, gasp, in imitation of dying fish. The probability of a good season is greatly enhanced by this process, which, though omitted now by many, is still widely followed.

The traps are laid in rows right across the river, and are in the form of immense baskets with gradually

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789 patient, they would almost certainly kill him, for it is very probable that a patient who believed that he had taken one of these by mistake or otherwise, would die of sheer fright.

825 The *inyifwira* is a fiery flying-serpent, which lives in pools, and turns the waters red; climbs trees, which thereupon break out into flame, but are not consumed; chases its prey for five miles, and lucky is he whose heels are light enough to escape; and finally, when dead, its body is made into the most powerful drug in the Konde Pharmacopœia. It gives authority to chiefs, and skill to doctors and diviners, and the common man who obtains possession of a tiny quantity is assured of success and riches. To tell the ordinary heathen Konde that all this is fable, is like telling very good and not necessarily unintelligent persons of a few generations ago, that there was no devil, with horns and hoofs and a tail!

Only the biggest doctors undertake to kill this monster when a fresh supply is called for. And even they, before beginning, protect themselves and their assistants with a great variety of other drugs, not so dangerous to obtain. The creature having been located in some pool or other, a small hut is built at a great distance, into which in the past a slave was put, to-day a sheep or a goat. The hut is now clayed over, and closed on all sides, the clay being thickly planted with sharp knives, and the whole sprinkled plentifully with a powdered food, of which the snake is very fond. All being ready, a swift runner is sent to the pool, a bell in his hand, the ringing of which attracts the

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snake. It emerges from the pool, with a *hu hu* sound, and the runner flies for his life towards the hut, pursued by the snake. Attracted by the sprinkled food, it climbs all over the hut, and is cut to pieces on the knives. After a little, and usually at night, the doctor in charge goes out to reconnoitre, and, finding the dead body, sends to tell all the surrounding chiefs and big doctors; who come, protected by a powerful prophylactic, for even the dead *inyifwira* can kill the unprotected. Each chief gets a portion of the flesh, a large share going to Chungu, who in turn distributes it to his leading subordinates and doctors. The blood is collected and sold, a small portion for a cow, to smaller men, who have no natural right to it.

The dread in which this medicine (*ifingira* it is now called) is held by the common people, is extraordinary. At Karonga in 1923 a man was accused of attempting to poison another. On his person was found a small packet done up in bark-cloth, which no native in the court would touch; and when the magistrate took it into his hands and proceeded to open it, the court was cleared in an instant. Whether it was the medicine made from the *inyifwira* snake, I do not know; but it undoubtedly belonged to that class of medicines.

Illnesses may be due to natural causes, which the native calls God. They yield to treatment without any ceremony. The prayer already quoted indicates the Konde attitude to such diseases. Secondly, illness may be due to witchcraft, and then there is no hope of cure until the sorcerer has been outwitted by

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753 the use of both drugs and ceremonies. Next, the action of the spirits brings on diseases, and until the cause of their anger has been dealt with, no doctor will undertake to cure the patient. Wounds or injuries in battle, by falling trees, by attack of animals, or by any other means, may be due to any of the above causes.

759 The doctor may be a man or a woman. The fee varies from about a farthing to a sixty shilling cow, and the manner of payment varies also. In some cases payment precedes treatment; in others, it follows; and in still others the degree of cure effected decides the amount to be paid.

757 In what follows, no attempt is made at scientific classification; rather a rough grouping of symptoms guides the sequence of items. Medicines are usually administered in beer or in milk, hot or cold, according to the disease which is being treated. And the place where the decoction is drunk is very important; in snake bite, for instance, it is fatal for the patient to go inside the house before the medicine has been taken which it is hoped will save his life. A native Christian was, in 1913, suspended from ordinances for drinking medicine while seated on a banana stem at a place where two paths met.

828 Mental troubles of various kinds are treated, and
757 not, I am assured, without success in some cases.
Maya is grief, due to any cause. It is treated by giving
●278 an infusion of a plant called *mabe*, not unlike parsley in appearance. The result is great cheerfulness in the patient, due, no doubt, to exhilarating qualities in

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the plant. *Ipingo* is sadness, or anger. The parents or relatives of an absent friend, having no news of him for some time, give way to grief or anger, and the emotion causes illness in the absent one. The latter goes to the diviner to learn why he is ill, and is told. The leaves of a plant called *inyekenyeke* are pounded and boiled in water, and the infusion drunk, the patient saying in the presence of the doctor:

"Let the words of those people fall back upon them. I have spoken no evil; I am not a hard man. God and the spirits behold me. May I get sleep."

Minyenya is nightmare. The actual meaning of the word is *ancestors*, and the bad dreams are due to their action. It is cured by an infusion of the plant *katetya*, taken while repeating the incantation: "We drive you away, you who trouble us. Leave our friend that he may sleep." *Amalelo* is disobedience to parents or relatives. Take the fruit of *imbangala* and *manya*, and add the flesh of the fish *ingumba*; reduce to a powder, and mix with beer in a small calabash. This the disobedient one is forced to drink three or four times, nothing being left in the calabash. I have no doubt at all that most children find obedience less obnoxious than the mixture. Similar success attends the use of a drug made from the *malombwa* tree. The *kasoka* is a tiny creature which covers itself with scraps of grass, and moves by using its head as a lever. It is a sovereign remedy, when mixed with other drugs, for madness, as well as for that form of madness which

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makes a woman unfaithful to her husband. For *impulamuto*, a brain trouble which makes the sufferer strike his head against trees or other hard objects, there is a cure, but I have not discovered what it is. For dizziness, an infusion is made from the roots of the *kalemerera* plant, and the patient first drinks, then washes his face with, the infusion. Epilepsy is treated with a mixture made from the roots and leaves of many plants. The mouth is forced open if necessary when the drink is being administered. Natives assert that cures are effected, but I know of no cases that have been cured.

There is no disease more common among the Bantu peoples than ulcers, sores, abscesses. The common *kironda* is treated with a wash made from the infusion of pounded *burungo* leaves. If it does not yield to treatment, it is due to witchcraft or spirits, and in either case the necessary preliminaries must be gone through. A special form of this disease is found when the ulcers break out on the breast or in the mouth. The diseased part is washed with an infusion of *indobo* bark, and another infusion is taken internally twice a day for a few days. A more malignant form is called *ndervika*, for which the leaves of the plant *kanga* are infused, and applied as for *kironda*, with the same ceremonies, if a cure is not effected within a reasonable time. *Mpanga* is a slightly different form of *ndervika*. *Kabimba* is something of the nature of an inside tumour which must be let out. Roots of the *tubimba* shrub are reduced to a dry powder, spread on the leaf of the *untaguta* tree, and bound to

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the place with a cord made from fibre of *kalumbu*; 757
in about ten minutes the swelling will burst and the 278
matter escape. The same results follow from binding
the place with cord made from *wapulaka* shrub.
Gourds are often used instead of leaves, and are tied
on with cords passing through holes bored in the
sides of the gourd. For syphilis (*kazuwadi*) the roots
of the *indabi* shrub are infused and drunk, and a
powder made from *indabo* shrub is rubbed into the
wounds or sores.

Kitanya is intussusception of the bowels, found mostly in children, and usually fatal. When one child after another in a family dies, an examination is made of the bowels, bamboo knives being used for the operation. If *kitanya* is indicated, the parents drink an infusion made from the leaves of a creeper called *ingwinka*, which is taken with beer. Then the bed is turned so that the head is where the feet were. The woman wears on her neck, tied up in a piece of bark, a section of the plant from which the infusion is made. But in giving this medicine, as in many others, the doctor will say, "This medicine is not mine; it is God's; He must work in you." When another child is born, the doctor is called to give it medicine, and to shave its head. The fee is a cow; and a hoe is paid when the child reaches the age of three.

For other internal conditions, a mere enumeration 757
must suffice. Internal pains, dysentery, diarrhœa, constipation, worms, vomiting, indigestion, and wasting diseases are all treated in similar fashion, each having its own specific drug or mixture of drugs.

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278 Fever, if due to natural causes, is treated with the infusion of the leaves of *amafumbo;* if due to the action of the spirits, a prayer for mercy is added. *Sekema* is malaria with headache. The patient must sit in the open, where he can see the sun, and drink from a closely woven basket an infusion of *lusisigembe;* and in some cases the extracted juice of *mavemavo* is put into one ear. There is a "general sickness" called *bukawya*, due to witchcraft. To neutralize the witchcraft, the whole body is washed with an infusion of *ulukanganawya*, and a drink is given made from the leaves of the *mangwina* tree. Severe burning is generally believed to be the work of the spirits if it occurs at night, and it is at night that most burns occur. The native is a heavy sleeper, and he lies with his feet stretched out towards the fire. A brand falls upon a foot, and he is burned before he has properly awakened; but it was the work of the spirits, who have now to be placated with cloth, or a goat, or a fowl. Then the burned parts are smeared with the honey of a small insect called *amawya*, and washed with the infusion of the leaves of the *kasambawya* shrub. Scalding is treated with castor oil.

Muscular pains like *ibirasa* and *ilyara*, which are probably pneumonia and rheumatism, are treated first as due to natural causes, and if this fails, witchcraft is assumed to be the cause, and steps taken accordingly. Prayer is offered, if the following can be called prayer:

"You *birasa*, if you have come from God, the medicine will cure you. If you have been sent by

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men, are not they also flesh? They fail, they die; but first they kill us. Let this disease fly away from me."

An infusion of the roots of *indobo* tree already mentioned, is now given to the patient.

Diseases of the eyes, ears, teeth, gums are also treated. A list would be tedious, and a detailed statement there is no space for. Enough to say that a person qualified for the task could write a good-sized book on the subject of native medicine. There are, however, still some diseases and practices of which some brief account must be given.

Snake bite. Naturally in a land where snakes are numerous, antidotes are in use, and are claimed to be successful. The roots of *kisongwa* infused and drunk, are said to be a sure remedy, if taken in time. A rich man, however, would not be advised to take this alone, for his riches bring him under suspicion of being a sorcerer, and the snake may have bitten him by command of his jealous fellow-sorcerers. To overcome this an incantation must be used.

"May you be defeated! The goods I have, I stole from no man. They are my own. This is true, as God sees me."

Another remedy is the root of *kitumbo*, the infusion mixed with soot from the inside of the house. The mixture must be drunk outside, for if the patient goes in he will die. A method favoured by other doctors is to hold the part bitten over a fire to which has been added the leaves of the *mkuwi*, a large tree. Presently

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757 the fang will drop out, and the man will be saved!
•278 There are men living near me who claim to have seen this being done.

844 The birth of children is accompanied by loving care, gross superstition, and much medical treatment, useful or otherwise. All women at that time are given a drink of *indobo* leaves, pounded and mixed with water. If the placenta has not come away satisfactorily, castor oil is given. And if pain supervenes, the bark of *indobo* is again given, pounded and mixed with water. For a child weak at birth, roots of *wenuka* and *wanguina* are taken, pounded, mixed with water, and the child is washed in the mixture. 842 Sterility in man or woman can be removed by the right drugs; and when a woman is getting on in years and wishes no more children, a mixture is in use which will have the desired effect. 847 Medicines for producing abortion are widely known, and 832 frequently used, as also are love potions.

757 Steaming is resorted to in cases of great pain or weakness. Water is cooked in a large pot, with the bark of *mparampara* added. When the pot has boiled, it is taken off the fire, and the patient, covered with a mat, kneels over it, supported if very weak, for about ten minutes. Massaging also is employed when one is very tired, the leaves of *mayoka* being pounded to give a juice for lubrication, or, as the people themselves say, to get into the body through the pores. Cupping is employed for headache and rheumatic pains. Eight cuts are made in two lines, on each side of the head; a small horn is put over the cuts; a

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vacuum is created by suction, and the hole in the horn closed with beeswax. In about a quarter of an hour the cup is removed. Pain in the eyes, legs, back, is so treated. 757

Smallpox, the most dreaded of all scourges, has already been dealt with under "Worship" and "Witchcraft," and all that is here necessary is to indicate what is done for the cure of patients. An infusion made from the roots of *ikanganunya* and *sambwe* is given to drink, and the body is washed with the same mixture. The pustules are opened with the thorns of *unsuba*. But more important than the medicine is a clear conscience in the patient; and prayer to the spirits and confession of sins must be made before the medicine is administered. The father, in the presence of all the family, says: "My son has smallpox; let us be at peace; whoever has anything against him, let him declare it." Any matters against the sick man are now inquired into. It may be a debt, or a quarrel, or a charge of impudence in the case of a boy. The sick man is also questioned, and makes his confession, usually of misconduct with girls, who are forbidden to approach the house. If married women are involved, neither they nor their husbands may come near. A prayer for the removal of the disease is now offered by the family representative, at the door of the house in which the patient lies, and the prayer is accompanied by the usual squirting of water from the mouth, which is never omitted. The medicine may now be administered to the sick man. A prophylactic is used by all the other members of the 757 278 755

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restored to their places, and the body is buried; and all who had any part in the operation drink medicine to protect them from the disease from which the man died. 763

For wounds in battle an infusion of the roots of *kamemena* is given to cause vomiting, in case there is blood in the stomach. The wounds are washed with an infusion of *impigi* roots, and bound with leaves of *untugutu*, fresh dressings being applied every day until the wounds are healed. 752 278

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went from Mwemuni's country down the path by Mwakalukwa's to Mwakaleli. He lived a year at Lumbila and found it too cold, and thence he went to Masoko, and thence to Lubaga. All men feared him and his animals. 599

In another version Lwembe's survival is linked with the possession of *ifingila*, the medicine on which still, today, the authority of chiefs is thought largely to depend. [773] [173]

Nkekete had much food and Mwemuni killed him because he had no *ifingila*. He killed him and he rose again. 'Why don't you die?' Mwemuni asked. Nkekete replied: 'I don't know, I have nothing, I am quite alone, I have no *ifingila*.' Mwemuni killed him again and he rose, many times. Then at last Nkekete said, 'I am tired.' And he showed Mwemuni and his men a razor (*isiwembe*) and said 'Kill me by cutting my throat with this', and they did and he stayed dead.

Mwemuni feared to kill Lwembe because he was very 'heavy'. He had *ifingila*, and when they tried to kill him they found his house full of animals, lions and others. . . . Once he turned himself into a stone when they tried to capture him. So Mwemuni told him to go far off, and he went with his two wives and two men, Kiwonde and Kimwelile. He went off riding on a lion like a donkey, with a lion behind his wives, and men were astonished when they saw him.

It is perhaps significant that Lwembe who survived is 'The Razor', by which Nkekete was killed, and the python from which *ifingila* medicine is made must be killed with razors and in no other way (*vide infra*, p. 60). [789] [825] [378]

It is Lwembe's capacity to make things live and grow which is always emphasized: [773]

Lwembe and another were given millet in their hands; Lwembe's sprouted, but not that of his fellow. He was told, 'You plant here and the other there.' The next day Lwembe's had sprouted, but not that of the other. He and his friend went to a hill in dry weather and wanted water. He just struck the earth and water came out. . . . He created leopards and kept them, and he moulded cattle of clay, he moulded them and they became cows, and his friends did the same and they remained clay.

When the heroes were driven out there was a fearful famine in BuKinga, for they had taken the fertility of the country with them, which is why, the priests say, sacrifices to them were begun by the Kinga. The priests of Lubaga were explicit on the point: [773] [173]

Mlozi (Lwembe 137) came from BuKinga, he took the road to

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CHAPTER X

MEDICINES

278 789 755 The Nyakyusa regard medicines as an ultimate source of power —given the right ingredients and the 'know how' a man may achieve anything. This conception is integral to their view of reality, moreover the distinctions made regarding the just use of them throw light on the Nyakyusa moral system, and must be examined. But a full analysis of Nyakyusa medicines (*imiketa*) would require a book in itself together with an expert knowledge of botany and of the properties of plants. Here we are concerned only with those aspects of the belief and practice in medicines which touch directly on social relationships or which illuminate the Nyakyusa conception of reality and morality, and their use of symbols.

Already many references have been made to medicines for they are an adjunct of most rituals, but their use is not confined to these; often a private individual is treated alone, and such a treatment is not classed by the Nyakyusa as a ritual (*ukupaga*), so we must stray, for a little time, beyond the limits of our title.

(a) TYPES OF MEDICINES

278 789 A classification in terms of purpose shows a close conformity with the use of medicines by other peoples in Africa. The use of medicines for protection and cure; for fertility; for success in any chancy undertaking from hunting and fishing to love-making, theft, a court case, or securing a job; for exacting vengeance; and for oracles, is familiar enough. What emerges from a detailed analysis is that the intractability of *persons* is felt to be at least as great a problem as the intractability of *things*, and many treatments are directed towards transforming personalities and developing moral qualities. The medicine given to a bride at puberty is to make her 'patient and polite' as well as fertile; the medicines given to chiefs and village headmen are to make them dignified and wise. A thief is often treated with medicines by his relatives to cure him of his thieving habits; and the famous *guambimale* medicine is used to control the anger of a husband, a chief, an employer, or a superior officer. (It is said to be much in

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demand among police and soldiers as well as wives.) Then there are medicines used by men and women to make themselves more attractive and persuasive as lovers, litigants, leaders, clients, servants, salesmen, and so on.

Certain Nyakyusa medicines are based on observation of cause and effect. Their pharmacopia includes purges and poisons—for example, castor oil has long been cultivated and used both for making ointment and as an aperient—and some of the drugs administered, and the poulticing with hot leaves, may well be therapeutic; we have no systematic knowledge of the plants used and cannot assess them. But the scientific element is demonstrably limited, for a great many medicines are based on the principle of association, a feeling of likeness between things, and things felt to be alike are believed to react on one another, like producing like, or like things being antagonistic.

No distinction is made by the Nyakyusa themselves between those medicines which one trained in western science would say are based on observation of cause and effect (e.g. a purge or a poison), and those which are based on association—indeed our friends constantly cited supposed observations of cause and effect as evidence of the efficacy of all sorts of medicines and taboos. Mwakyembe used charcoal, mixed with iron from a forge, as a medicine for protection against lightning, burying a little, and powdering a little, and sprinkling it about a homestead, 'because at the forge they blow the bellows and it says, "*Mali, mali, mali*" (i.e. boom, boom, boom) and the lightning *sikamuleka* (booms). When we blow the bellows at a forge it makes a noise like thunder.' There was no hint that he was aware that electricity might be attracted by iron, but he insisted that where he had buried the charcoal and iron the lightning *never* struck again, and he regarded this as cause and effect. Therefore the distinction we have made between observation and association is ours, not theirs.

That the symbolic element is at least as important as the practical was apparent from Lyandileko's treatment for sterility, which was famous for its success. She had three patients one morning, all women wanting to bear children. In front of her she ranged seventeen banana petals and mixed four different medicines in them. Then she chose three young banana shoots and bored a hole in each, inserting into it a length of the mid-rib of a banana leaf, slightly hollowed to form a runnel. She told an onlooker to bring the first petal full of medicine and poured it into the runnel.

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279 The patient knelt and received the medicine in cupped hands,
§42 guiding it into her mouth. Lyandileko hung a little medicine horn on the rumnel before pouring. The patient kept the medicine in her mouth until the rumnel was removed and she spat through the hole. Then the hole was filled up with the petal off which the medicine had been poured. Lyandileko smeared the patient on the belly with medicine from a horn, and pushed the horn down under her bark-cloth to the genitals, in front, and on to the buttocks behind. As she did this she said, 'If you are barren the banana will rot, if you are fertile I give you medicine to bear a child.' This was done for each patient in turn. Then the banana suckers were planted and the medicine from the remaining petals poured into bottles (two made of banana leaves, one a Vermouth bottle) for the patients to take home. They were to take a dose each day for a week. As the treatment was proceeding Lyandileko talked of her successes: 'So-and-so drank twice and her belly sprouted. . . . So-and-so drank and she came back to me pregnant. . . .'

After a week the women came back to see whether their banana suckers had sprouted. Lyandileko explained: 'The banana sucker is the child, it sprouts quickly, it is the belly which sprouts quickly.
[781] If it dies they consult an oracle—the woman does not conceive.' And her son added, 'If a woman's sucker dies Lyandileko tells her: "Don't say I have not worked for you, don't you see your banana? You are rotten in yourself, indeed they must have allowed your cord to fall between your mother's legs."[1] They rejoice very much if it has grown.' Each petal represents a child; Lyandileko used male and female symbols (plantain and sweet banana petals) alternately for boys and girls. One mother who had no child had asked for ten, another with two already for eight, another with three already for six. Lyandileko's arithmetic had gone wrong for there were only seventeen petals altogether. The horn is the horn of protection (*ulupembe lwa ipinga*) and it means here, 'May the "issue" stay nicely within, may it not come out in front or
[781] behind, may it stay inside.' (Issue is a symbol for the reproductive capacity of women.) Neither Lyandileko nor her son (who were both forthright in their discussion of ritual) seemed to be conscious of any symbolic enactment of coition, though a knowledge of the symbolism of the death and puberty rituals suggests that.

[1] Cf. Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, p. 125.

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(5) MEDICINES AND MORALITY

Doctors classify most of their medicines in terms of the supposed mystical causes of disease, and the determining factor in diagnosis is what quarrels have occurred in the patient's circle of kinsmen and friends, or what wrongdoing he has on his conscience. The medicines mentioned to us by various doctors were for treatment of sickness caused by 'the breath of men', by sorcery, by vengeance magic, by the protective medicine put on wives, by the anger of the shades or living senior relatives, by incest, by spearing or binding with ropes,[1] or abnormal birth. Only a few of the medicines listed were for the treatment of observable symptoms such as fever, too frequent periods, or swelling after snake-bite, rather than the supposed mystical cause.

The emphasis on discovering the mystical cause and counteracting it was shown very clearly when Godfrey Wilson accompanied Mwakyonde, the doctor, to the home of a patient, a young man so weak that he could not lift a limb. Mwakyonde spent two minutes examining him, and provided leaves with which he was poulticed, and a medicine which was rubbed into cuts made all over his body, but the greater part of the day was devoted to discussing the quarrel between kinsmen, from which his illness was thought to have arisen, to persuading the kinsmen to 'speak out', and to preparing and administering a medicine which would cause the death of any one of them who was working sorcery against another.

Medicine for the treatment of a disease is held to be ineffective—at the best a temporary palliative—unless the underlying cause is discovered and dealt with. For example, doctors spoke of possessing a medicine against *ilyapa*, the disease caused by a kinsman to whom a debt in cattle is due, but it is not effective alone. 'The wrongdoer drinks medicine and pays his kinsman. He must pay, for though the medicine may cure him temporarily the disease will come again if he does not pay his debt.'

The ultimate cause of disease is believed to be friction in social relationships—a breach in moral law—and so the study of medicines takes us directly to problems of morality. There is a deep-rooted conviction that medicines will not be effective if there is quarrelling in the family which uses them. This applies not only to medicines used in sickness, but also to those for protection

[1] *op. cit.*, pp. 179-9.

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and achievement. An account of the treatment of a field for protection against wild pig emphasizes this.

If people wish to protect a crop from wild pig they go to a doctor to ask for medicine. When he gives it to them he tells them that there must be no quarrelling in the home after they have barricaded the field. Four women go to the field with the husband of the one who cultivates it. They go after sunset. One women is shaved; her head is a symbol of the garden devastated by pig. A second woman, who keeps her hair, ties a head-pad on her head and carries bananas with medicine. She enters the field and cuts the bananas. The husband climbs a hill at a little distance, and two of the women go into the long grass close to the field. The bald pate twists a head-pad and the one with hair smears it with medicine and as they do so they look towards their husband and abuse him saying, 'You lay with your mother', and he swears at them saying, 'The leather aprons of your fathers' . . . and many other insults. Then the women walk round the edge of the field, sprinkling medicines, and they go out the way they came in. The circular pad is a symbol of the barricade placed round the field. When they return home they do not eat but go to sleep hungry (though the clever ones eat beforehand). If they quarrel, the pig finishes the food. It is as if quarrelling destroyed the fierceness, the power, of the protective medicine; you must put aside all quarrelling that the medicine may be powerful. If the pigs come it is as if there were a quarrel, so the woman and her husband quarrel in the field mimicking the pig. The husband on the hill is like the pig approaching the field, his wives in the long grass also represent pigs. . . . The husband and his wives quarrel only in the field. If, when the maize is ripe, the husband beats one of his wives for any cause she does not go to pick the maize herself, a friend picks it for her. If she goes in her anger she finds the maize finished, nothing but earth is left.

Here the link between medicines and morality is made plain. Quarrelling weakens medicines of all sorts and renders them ineffective. But a mimic quarrel between husband and wives in the fields renders the medicine effective. It represents the battle between the pig and the medicines. There is a suggestion elsewhere (pp. 69, 113) that pigs are *sent* by the shades when kinsmen or neighbours quarrel, but in the account just quoted it is implied that quarrelling in the home directly injures the medicine.

In themselves, many medicines are neutral. They may be put to good or evil ends, but because they are mysterious and powerful, they are feared, in the same sort of way as atomic energy is feared in contemporary society. Men use medicines themselves 'for purely peaceful purposes', but they are shocked at

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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the prospect of their enemies using them. The notion that medicines are a weapon which may be used rightly or wrongly is very clearly brought out in the attitude towards 'making' animals. If a private individual 'makes' lion, or leopard, or crocodile which kill men that is sorcery—there is no question about it—and we heard of at least one man who had been driven from his home because he was reputed to have made leopards which killed children and cattle,[1] but when Mwakyonde 'made' lions which drove off pig and did not attack men, that was a public service (*vide* p. 69). And when one chief uses lions in his conflict with another the action is felt to be comparable with war, rather than murder. In February 1937, four lions were hunting in a piece of bush country near the salt lick, which two chiefs claimed. Mwanaumbwe, a chief from the hills, had sent some of his men to clear fields in the bush, but Mwakagile (or his heir), the neighbouring chief, objected saying, 'This is my land.' There was a long case and finally the District Officer gave judgement in favour of Mwakagile and refused Mwanaumbwe any compensation for his work in clearing the bush. 'You got a crop for your labour,' he said. Mwanaumbwe was incensed by the judgement and grew even more angry when his men elected to remain on the land they had cleared and became men of Mwakagile. So, everyone said, Mwanaumbwe had sought medicines and created these lions. They killed seven cattle in a few days, attacking even by daylight. 'Yes,' we were told, 'there are always lion in the bush, but they do not ordinarily kill cattle as they have done now.'

Another chief who tried the same sort of thing was not so successful. 'Some time ago the chief Mwakila made elephants, he turned his wives into elephants and they are the baseness of Malapula, but Malapula said, "Let's try", and he created much rain which poured down on to the elephants and those wives died. Then Mwakila was defeated. How about you Europeans? Have you this custom? Do you turn a wife into an animal?'

'No!'

'We have it, if I choose I give my wife *isipita* and she becomes a lion which roars, it roars and eats people.'[2]

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 124.

[2] This, and the tale of a young man fleeing from justice who obtained a medicine to turn himself into a lion, were the only admissions of lycanthropy we heard—usually the medicines themselves (such as those of a chief) turn into animals, or the young of ordinary lion, leopard, or crocodile 'smell the medicines' and become attached to the 'owner' who feeds and accompanies them.

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787 A second class of medicines is not neutral at all, but itself selects between right and wrong. The most famous is the *masi* [278] ordeal which is used to reveal the truth. The *masi* poison was formerly administered by a doctor,[1] before witnesses, and the innocent were believed to vomit almost immediately, while the guilty did not vomit at all, or were slow to do so, and fell ill, some even dying. Nowadays *masi* is administered only in the greatest secrecy, but various minor methods of divination, all of which turn on the correct use of medicines, are in common use. The 'divination with porridge' has been described (*vide supra*, p. 108). The medicine added to it is spoken of as 'a kind of *masi*'. Another method is to rub an inverted wooden cup on a smooth board. Questions are posed, as to the porridge. When the answer is 'no' the cup slips; when the answer is 'yes' the cup sticks. Sometimes a stick of *mutika* wood is rubbed on the ground in place of the cup on the board, and there are half a dozen other methods using bells, horns, segments of bamboo, a pipe, or boiling water. In each case virtue lies in the medicines added to the porridge or rubbed on to the cup or stick, and into scarifications in the diviner's hands. An ordinary man who has not been treated cannot use the instruments, and porridge without '*masi*' is useless.

751 Certain medicines used for protection and to wreak vengeance, 754 are also thought to be selective, and to injure only the guilty. 769 These are horns, owned by doctors. Mwanjisi (who came of a family of doctors) told us:

[770] My father had a water-buck horn filled with medicines and ointment, as a protection against witches. He used it, like other doctors, for burning the grass, for burning the rubbish heaps before planting millet, and for protecting a child. When the millet crops are poor, people say the witches have eaten it, and the next year the chief sends for the doctor and his protective horn. . . . He comes and makes fire and treats the tinder with ointment from his horn, and each pile of weeds is lit from that fire. . . . He sends some to the chief to fire the grass for fresh grazing. Then there is much milk, the cows that eat that grass give much milk for the witches may stay and neither eat the millet nor pervade the cows. So with a child, if a man has lost many children and has one left, he calls the doctor to come with his protective medicine (*ifipenge*) and treat the child with medicines from his horn as a protection against witches. My father used the same horn for all these things.

[1] For a description of the procedure, cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 113-6, 191-6.

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If a man has quarrelled with a kinsman, or is conscious of having bitter enemies, or hears that someone with whom he has had a dispute has 'gone to the doctors', he is likely to go to a horn doctor for protective medicine, even though he is perfectly well. 751 [578]

'The horn' is believed to discover and punish the guilty whether they are known to the injured or not, but if someone uses it without just cause the medicine will recoil on himself. The seven cases of using the horn reported to us[1] were all used in revenge: two for theft, two for seduction, and three for withholding cattle due. And it is revenge that was emphasized in one account of the treatment: 789 751 754

If someone has stolen my cow I go to a doctor and pay him a bull. Then he prepares the medicine (the horn) and stands facing it, with a spear over his shoulder, pointing towards it, and he speaks aloud saying: 'So-and-so, if you have not taken the cow you will recover, if you have eaten it you will die.' Then the breath (*indeye*) goes to the man named and if he has really stolen the cow he dies. . . . [685]

But another informant, listing the contents of a 'horn', stressed the protective element. It contains 'the bile of a crocodile, the skin of a python, and *isyifwila* medicine (*vide* p. 58) which has been used to kill men' . . . [278]

If a witch comes to throttle and kill you then the bile of the crocodile throttles and strikes him [the witch], and the *isyifwila* does the same, it is to kill the witches, it spears those who come to throttle you. The skin of the python means that if people come to throttle you they find you have changed yourself into a python.

Another type of vengeance magic, *ilyeya*, is thought to work only between blood relatives.

If your father-in-law is angry it is your children he kills, not yourself. If the diviner says the disease comes from the woman's side of the family the protective medicine is given only to her, not to the man; if from his side only he is protected, not the wife. The relative who is angry drinks a medicine; he puts a barbed spear into the fire and when it is red hot he slashes a banana sucker with it and speaks the name, then the kinsman who is mentioned dies. [578]

A third type is that used to secure property (*akaniepa*) and snare thieves or adulterers, for the exclusive rights of a husband over his wife are treated as property rights. Often a medicated stick is placed in a field to ward off thieves, and some husbands [685] [684]

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 219-36.

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a missionary, was warned by her servants before Godfrey Wilson's arrival in her neighbourhood 'not to go out at night as there were *abanyambala* about, sent by the Government to kill people and take their blood', and women going for firewood made a long detour to avoid his camp. One was overheard asking when she caught sight of him: 'Is that the man who kills people?' Angombwike explained that, since all really strong Nyakyusa medicines contained human blood, it was argued that European medicines, which were so powerful, must contain it also. 'They follow their own customs.'

It seems obvious to the Nyakyusa that Europeans must have strong medicines because their confidence and success are so great. Moreover, it is held (in theory) that they are immune to attacks from witchcraft. X, who had been a clerk and lost his job, and was bitter, expanded on this:

> People say that Europeans have *isyifwila* (*vide* p. 58), see they are brave, they do not fear, if someone seizes a spear they do not fear, they just come to him, they are very brave. And also the witches say that they are unable to choke Europeans. When we hear people boasting of their mystical power (*amaaga*) we always say to them: 'But if that is so, go and choke a European, show us!' Then they always say, 'Oh no, we can't do that, when we go to a European house at night we find it all lighted up and flaming, we can't get near them.' I think this is the power of the Holy Spirit which you Europeans have.

He came of a well-known family of doctors and perhaps spoke from first-hand knowledge. He just laughed at the suggestion that the light might come from lamps. But the fact that Europeans were held to be immune did not prevent our servants and friends attributing our recurring attacks of malaria to witchcraft.

(*c*) DOCTORS

Among the Nyakyusa, as perhaps in every society, the doctors with the greatest reputation are those at a distance, and a high proportion of the practitioners in the country are of foreign lineages, their fathers, or grandfathers, or great-grandfathers having come in, bringing medicines with them, and begun to practice. In fact, we were assured that there were *no* Nyakyusa doctors who were famous, they were all Sangu, or Kinga, or Kisi, or from Ngonde or Misuku in Nyasaland, but detailed investigation proved this to be false. The trade in medicines from a distance is a very old one and continues today. As we have seen,

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791 [491] [278] [458] *isyi/sule* comes from west of Ngonde, or east of the Kinga; *umuŋi* came from 'Nyasaland'; medicine for fertility of the fields from Misuku which is rich in food; war medicine from the Sangu and Kinga. Whether neighbouring people get medicines from Bo-Nyakyusa we do not know—no one ever suggested it, but it is likely that they do.

[177] Since foreign doctors and medicines have the highest reputation new treatments are welcomed. This is where the practice of medicines differs radically from the rituals directed to the shades in which the charter is tradition, and any deviation must be justified. But the willingness to accept something new did not lead to any systematic experiment, or any regard for experiment as such.

791 278 Anyone who chooses, and can pay the fees, can become a doctor by apprenticing himself to a practitioner of repute, but it is very noticeable that the majority of well-known doctors come from families of doctors, the medicines being passed down from one generation to the next and sometimes taught to wives as well. Lyandileko, who has often been quoted, was taught certain medicines by her husband, and had a large practice. The diviners we knew were all men, but many women know a number of medicines. Once in practice, a doctor may add to his knowledge by buying a medicine from a fellow practitioner or exchanging medicines with him. One doctor we knew had paid two bulls for the secret of his protective medicine (*umbete gwe ifinga*). The teaching includes what plants or other ingredients to collect and how to 'cook' them, i.e. what to mix together and what quantities to use. As elsewhere in Africa, it is the material substance, usually vegetable, which is held to be important in any treatment. The spell—the words addressed to the medicine—is of little significance except that when vengeance magic is prepared the man on whose behalf it is done may say the name of his enemy (if he knows his identity) and state his own innocence in a phrase like the following: 'Return this medicine, thou Kyala, I have done no wrong whatsoever to cause me to be killed; if he says he will kill me let him die.'

791 793 The doctor (*isenge*) who 'knows medicines' is distinguished from the priest or officiant (*usenge*) who knows how to conduct a ritual directed to the shades or heroes. The *usenge* uses medicines in celebrating rituals, and he or she may be able to collect and prepare plants himself, but he sometimes has to apply to a doctor

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for an appropriate medicine, and his main function is organising the observances. 791 793

(d) SYMBOLISM

In the field of medicine imagination runs riot, and associations are unpredictable. The ingredients of most medicines are professional secrets and unknown to the user who takes the concoction on trust from his doctor, and inquires no further. Therefore the study of medicine is not linked to the study of social relationships in the same manner as is the study of ritual, for the symbolism of medicines is individual and free, whereas the symbolism of ritual is common and obligatory. 278 789

Nevertheless, the imagination of doctors works within the general symbolic system, and such knowledge as we have indicates that many of the associations made are similar to those used in ritual. In medicine, as in the rituals of kinship, one type of banana stands for a male, another for a female, a banana sucker [131] represents a kinsman, a sprouting shoot conception. Smithing and [126] coition are felt to be alike, and the molten iron that trickles out of a forge is linked with menstrual blood. Hair stands for growth, and a bald pate a devastated field. A ring, or circumambulation, implies a protecting fence. Pythons, crocodiles, leopards, and lions stand [125] for power and majesty, spears and thorns for attack; vomiting and [127] emptiness for innocence, spitting for forgiveness. There is colour [122] symbolism in medicines (though we know little of it save that the *ikipiki* which stands for the blood of the lineage is red, or reddish brown), and auditory symbolism, the rumble of thunder and the groaning of a bellows being identified. Men mime that which they wish to avoid, as well as that which they desire; like things are antagonistic as well as sympathetic. No doubt a laborious study of prescriptions would reveal further general principles of association, as well as the range of individual imagination, but such a task has yet to be undertaken.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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were connected. And if the expected judgement does not fall when a son has wronged his father it is said: 'The father loves the child so much that he only complains half-heartedly.'

It is admitted (when the point is pressed) that misfortunes *may* fall on good men as well as evil, and then they are interpreted as a discipline, a testing, from God, but this is 'a hard saying', scarcely to be believed. The *inequalities* in the fortunes of men demand explanations and Christians, as well as pagans, find it very difficult to believe that they are 'natural'. They always suspect some human intervention; they believe that men manipulate mystical power to buy fortune for themselves. The reality of pythons in the belly may be doubted by the better educated, but belief in 'medicines' has scarcely diminished, and new medicines are constantly coming in from outside, among them costly patent medicines guaranteed to cure any and every disease, or to make the user popular and successful. Some sort of distinction between medicines which it is permissible for a Christian to use and those, like love-potions and defence against witchcraft, which are not permissible, is attempted, but the line is an arbitrary one. And often there is a conflict in the individual's own mind: as one elderly woman of a chief's family (who would normally have taken the first-fruits medicines) put it: 'It's taboo to use those medicines; even if we do fall ill we say: "No, I will not take it, I look towards God (pointing upwards)."'

Most Christians have pagan kindsfolk who are quick to interpret misfortunes in pagan terms, and the sort of conflict of ideas that arises is illustrated in the case of a young woman who died in childbirth. She and her father were Moravians; her husband had joined the Pentecostal Church which rejects all Nyakyusa medicines. Her first child was still-born, the second died shortly after its birth, and her father insisted that she should have been taking a medicine which it was customary for women in his lineage (he was a Penja) to drink during pregnancy; the girl herself wished to be treated, for she did not accept the teaching of the Pentecostal Church on this point, but her husband refused. During her third pregnancy she was ill and finally, with her husband's consent, she was carried to a Nyakyusa doctor of her father's choosing; nevertheless she died. Her father and her husband had been on bad terms, the father demanding, rather arbitrarily, the balance of the marriage cattle; and there was a great deal of gossip, some neighbours hinting that her own father had killed

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I went to the place and got permission to enter the hut in which the first part of the ceremony took place. I found there the parents of the girl, the girl sitting enveloped in clothes in one corner of the hut, and some older females, one of whom was the acting *wesegeje*. Some male guests were also present[28]. As the girl had had her first catamenia the present ceremony marked at the same time the end of her preparation for marriage.

The *wesegeje* prepared a beverage of beer in which a light-brown medical powder (*imbondenge*) was put. First the girl had to drink from it, then the parents followed. This beverage was believed to strengthen (*ukwainga*) the consumers. Then a spear was handed to the girl by her father, and the girl handed it in turn to some relatives of the bridegroom waiting near the hut. These persons had to bring the spear to the girl's bridegroom as a sign that he could now marry the girl[29], but not before he had brought a bull to the girl's father. After this the girl, now sitting in the middle of the hut, was given small gifts from the participants in the ceremony.

Practical instruction of premature girls in house-hold matters.

Following this the whole body of the girl was anointed before the door of the hut. The *wesegeje* began by anointing her legs; then the girl herself continued it. The ointment was prepared from castor oil and a powder of red wood (*Kipimbo*, found commonly in the environment of Lake Rukwa). At this moment a male participant in the ceremony chanced to, came out of the hut, and suddenly a young woman

[28] Cf. Wilson, Introduction, p.256; The Study of African Society, p.11 (The Rhodes-Livingstone Paper No.3, 1939).

[29] *ukwega*: to take (also as regards marrying); *ukwegia*: nuptials.

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he had received this object from his ancestors and it must always hang on this spot, as the ancestral spirits (*abasyuka*)[1] themselves controlled its presence. It consisted of an *unuvigara*, i. e. the tail of an ox, but the upper part of it was hollow. In this hollow part medicines (*ifingila*)[2] were kept. Yet another magical medicine, in the shape of a piece of bark of the tree called *Erythrophleum Guineense*[3] was fastened at the upper end of this sign. When my European attendant immediately said to the chief: "And from this piece you make your *mwaf*[4]", the chief exclaimed in astonishment: "*Unaa wewa Kyara!*" (You are sons of Kyara! i. e. You Europeans know everything.)

After this there was no more delay in revealing to us some more features of this sign of dignity. According to the belief of his fathers this object possessed a special *amaka* (power)[5], e. g. to defeat enemies, if the chief were to hold it directly against them. Also if a thief were to try to enter the room by force, by making a hole beneath the wall of this part of the hut, he would be stricken by power coming from the *abasinga* and he would have the impression that eyes are directed against him, and so be driven away.

After these interesting communications I went to visit the hut of one of his wives, which still revealed the *isyenga*, the old-fashioned round structure of bamboo poles diverging from their upper end and thatched with grass[6].

9. The frequent walks in company with the chief or some of his *amafumu* gave me several opportunities for enquiries. On one occasion,

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[1] Cf. Wilson, Burial, p. 9: *unuyuka* (Sing.); Mackenzie, p. 191: *banyuka* (Karonga).

[2] Cf. Mackenzie, p. 275: *ifingira* (Karonga).

[3] The pharmacological substance of the bark (Cortex Erythrophlei, „Sasse-bark") is the alcaloid Erythrophleïn which produces the same typical effects on the heart as the Digitalis-group (cf. C. G. Santesson: Pfeilgiftstudien XII. Arkiv för Botanik 27 A, No. 4, Stockholm 1935, p. 6).

[4] Cf. Wilson, Land Rights, p. 31; *Merensky*, p. 134; *Fülleborn*, p. 309.

[5] *amaka* is not a specific expression for „magical" or (religious) „supernatural" power, although, from the European standpoint this meaning may be connected with the word in specific cases, but generally it means any striking expression or effect of a quality *of* a person or object, e. g. *upiki eki ngalimo amaka*, in this wood is power. This word is, therefore, a parallel to the Austronesian, especially Polynesian word *mana*, examined in my treatise „Mana. The term of that what is exceedingly striking". Staatliches Forschungsinstitut für Völkerkunde. I. Reihe. Ethnographie. Vol. 2. Leipzig 1922. If the Nyakyusa wishes to say that a phenomenon is "supernatural", then he connects it with *Kyara*, or he names it directly "*Kiara*" (cf. *Merensky*, p. 110 [197, 215]).

[6] Cf. *Fülleborn*, p. 277, fig. 140: Schematical average of a round-hut (as also to be found with the Nyakyusa still today).

14:Lehmann E-5 (1939)1951 F?17 Ngonde F?17
Nyakyusa

The tender leaves of pumpkins and taro plants (*amasimbi*, leaves of taro), as well as of a number of other plants growing wild (*indeke*) are also used as vegetables. This food is called *iseke*, a word denoting all sorts of green vegetables.

In his treatise on "The Land Rights of Individuals among the Nyakyusa" (The Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, No. 1; 1938, p. 43). G. Wilson points out that the fruit of the *so* — called *usuyungudi* — tree is "both delicious to eat and also full of seeds which are dried and crushed for ointment (*ingemba*)", but he adds that he had been unable to find out the botanical name of this useful tree. Perhaps the following passage in the article of Dr. Kerr Cross ("Notes on the Country Lying between Lakes Nyasa and Tanganyika"; Proc. Roy. Geogr. Inst. N.S.Vol. XIII, 1891, p. 98) may be helpful in this connection: "There is a tree of the sycamore family which grows extensively all over the north of the lake called *mwinyungute* by the natives which might be developed. It is a most picturesque tree which produces a food, an oil, and a dye. The oil or fat, when cool, is solid, even at a tolerably high temperature, and is like beeswax. It burns well as a night-light, and with wax might be made into candles. In a rude way I have made candles of it. It might also make an excellent soap."

As an adjunct to these foods curdy milk (*ulukoma ulukafu*) is very much esteemed[1], to say nothing of the various types of beer, mostly prepared from millet for the men. Large fields of millet are, therefore, to be seen everywhere in the land of the Nyakyusa. On one occasion I attended a beer drink in the hut of a chief. The conduct of the natives present, the chief and his advisers (*amafumu*), was in every respect praise-worthy. Pleasant and interesting stories were narrated. Not infrequently the invitation of a commoner who has had some difference with his chief or one of the *amafumu* to such a feast is regarded as a gesture of reconciliation.

As in the time of Sir H. H. Johnston so also to-day "all the cozy-meadows are planted with rice." A traveller coming from the hilly region to the north on nearing Lake Nyasa is struck by numerous large fields of rice in the plain at the northern end of the lake.

11. Crafts. Mackenzie (1925) is certainly justified in complains of the decay of the arts and crafts among the Nyakyusa. The Indian and European influence is to be seen everywhere in the deterioration and final dissolution of these branches of the ancient culture of the Nyaky-

[1] A. Wilson, Introduction, p. 256.